



An online review of Foreign Agricultural Service initiatives and services

Programs and Opportunities

IICA: Instrument of Change for the Americas

By Mary Rekas

This October, IICA, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture celebrated 63 years of helping farmers in the Americas.

This affiliate of the Organization of American States, headquartered in Costa Rica, provides technical cooperation services and facilitates hemispheric policy dialogue among its 34 members to promote the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas.

IICA was originally established for research and graduate training in tropical agriculture. The Institute found its métier 25 years ago when it began facilitating technical cooperation in agricultural development in the Americas.

This institutionalized networking created a forum that encouraged countries to share experiences and knowledge, with the end goals of improving agricultural production and building consensus on trade and technology.

IICA Refocuses on Reform

With new vision and mission objectives in hand and the Doha Development Agenda being negotiated, the Institute now has the opportunity to advance the participation of developing countries on the world stage of agricultural trade negotiations.

This is being accomplished by supporting the attendance of IICA member countries at sanitary and phytosanitary committee meetings at the WTO (World Trade Organization) meetings in Geneva.

The United States would like developing countries to take an active role in trade negotiations, such as the WTO's Doha Development Agenda and the regional Free Trade Area of the Americas.

It is a familiar but proven mantra—freer, fairer trade offers the promise of lifting nations economically. As an engine of economic growth, open commerce is the best means for reducing hunger and alleviating poverty.

Free trade agreements that focus on opening markets, reducing distortions and improving disciplines produce economic benefits, particularly for developing countries.

IICA plays an important role in fostering a climate receptive to free trade. The organization introduces technology and sustainable agricultural practices that help producers in developing nations become competitive.

In turn, free trade nurtures financial stability, economic growth and expanded trade in the Western hemisphere.

IICA's Vision and Mission Guide Development Work

Vision: To transform IICA into a development agency designed to promote sustainable agricultural development, food security and prosperity to the rural communities of the Americas.

Mission: To support the Member States in their pursuit of progress and prosperity in the hemisphere through the modernization of the rural sector, the promotion of food security, and the development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared, environmentally managed, and socially equitable for the people of the Americas.

IICA's 34 member states have a direct say in policy through two governing bodies—the IABA (Inter-American Board of Agriculture), composed of all member countries, and the rotating 12-member Executive Committee. Strategizing efforts via 4-year plans, the Institute focuses on sustainable agricultural development in less developed rural areas.

In pursuit of its vision and mission, IICA focuses its actions on six strategic areas:

- trade and agribusiness development
- technology and innovation
- agricultural health and food safety
- sustainable rural development
- information and communication
- education and training

For more information on IICA programs, see: <http://www.iica.int>

IICA's Developing Country Emphasis

The organization works to improve rural well-being in developing countries by bringing positive changes to the basic fabric of the agricultural community—in production, trade and institutions.

To accomplish these ends, IICA offers services in training, research, information exchange, support for meetings and project formulation and implementation. Through these processes, IICA's leadership is focusing on helping member countries make strides toward economic development and trade liberalization.

The United States has long supported IICA with human and financial resources. The United States contributes 60 percent of IICA's \$30 million budget. U.S. Department of State controls those funds and takes the lead with respect to budget and personnel issues. USDA takes the lead on matters. As member countries of IICA are current and future customers for U.S. food and agricultural products, our partnership with IICA is clearly in the best interests of U.S. farmers, ranchers and exporters.

Trade Capacity Building a Must

Independent, financially secure countries can participate as full partners in the global community. Enabling developing countries to achieve this capability in international forums helps create an environment that promotes trade and investment. Trade capacity building programs enhance participation by these countries.

The United States sees IICA as a prime vehicle for strengthening grass-roots agriculture in the Americas. With this objective in mind, USDA has supported several trade capacity building programs through IICA.

These programs include:

- serving as the Secretariat of the Market Information Organization of the Americas in promoting harmonization in market reporting systems
- supporting attendance of IICA members at the World Trade Organization's Sanitary and Phytosanitary Committee meetings in Geneva
- addressing health and food safety concerns through building the Codex Alimentarius capacity
- advancing biotechnology through development of a hemispheric strategy

While the challenges are many, so are the opportunities. IICA makes a difference in the lives of the peoples of the Americas through agricultural development. ■

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IICA Members

Member countries are divided into regions:

Central Region: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama

Northern Region: Canada, Mexico, United States

Southern Region: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay

Andean Region: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela

Caribbean Region: Antigua and Barbudah, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago

European Region: Spain

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